

The Rich Man, the Poor Man and the Way the Pelandok Squared the Score.*

The story is told that once on a time there was an extremely wealthy merchant who lived in his house in the country at his ease eating and drinking every day. Now quite close to his garden there was the house of two people, husband and wife. One day the wife of the poor man was chattering with a friend of the merchant, when she said,

"Whenever anything is cooked in the merchant's house, whether it is fried or baked or stewed or broiled, then and then only do I eat. For whenever I smell anything being fried or baked or stewed or broiled in the merchant's house I eat with a good appetite. That is how I happen to be so plump, through eating thus. Whenever I want to eat I always make it a practice to wait till there is a smell of cooking in the merchant's house. Then I eat." The merchant's friend told him all that the poor woman had said. As soon as the rich man and his wife heard this, the rich man exclaimed.

"Of course that is why we never get stout. It seems that all the flavour of our frying and baking and stewing and broiling is quite devoured by these two poor people." The rich man was very angry indeed with the poor man and cursed and abused him up hill and down dale finally demanding that the poor man and his wife should pay the price of anything that had ever been cooked in his house. He went off and complained to the raja of the country and sued for all his expenses in frying and baking and stewing and broiling on the ground that the flavour thereof had been devoured by the poor man and his wife. The raja summoned the poor man and his wife before him. When he made enquiries the poor man replied,

* This tale told by Penghulu Haji Mohamed Nasir bin Kanda Mat Sen of Hutan Melintang, who first learnt it from one Pawang Talip bin Mohamed of Menangkabau.

"Of a truth Your Highness, thy slave sups whenever there is a smell of cooking in the merchant's house."

The king came to the conclusion that he was unable to give a decision and so he ordered the gong to be beaten throughout the whole country and a proclamation to be made.

"Ho, whoever gentle or lord, can decide the plaint that the merchant prefers against this poor man will be made the vizier of the land."

But no man replied to the proclamation. At last the pelandok said to the herald. "Oh herald, what is troubling the king of the country? Where are his enemies breaking in? Which of his soldiers has committed murder? Where is the wall of the royal fort that is in need of repair?"

"None of these. But a certain merchant has made complaint to the king, and the king has caused proclamation to be made that whoever will decide the plaint of the rich man against these two poor people, husband and wife, will be made the grand vizier of the land."

"Pray thee, inform the king that I will settle the case."

"Very well, Salam di Rimba, come along with me to the king."

When they reached the royal hall the king said to the herald. "Have you found any one who can settle the question of right and wrong between the merchant and the poor man?"

The herald made obeisance and replied, "May I be pardoned a thousandfold, Salam di Rimba hath declared that he can give judgment in the case between the rich man and the poor man, O my lord."

The king said, "Is it true that Salam di Rimba hath said that he can give judgment in the merchant's case?"

The pelandok made obeisance and replied, "With the help of your highness' aid, your servant will give judgment between the merchant and the poor man."

"If you are not able to, I will kill you forthwith."

"If I am slain thy servant will die and my lord will be one slave the poorer."

"Give judgment quickly."

The pelandok then went up on to the judgment seat and the merchant and the poor man were called and placed before him. The pelandok enquired of the rich man. "How much of your money has been devoured by the poor man?" The merchant replied, "Full a thousand dollars hath thy servant lost." The pelandok then asked the poor man "Is it true that you eat whenever there is any smell of frying or baking or stewing or boiling in the merchant's house?" The poor man replied, "Of a truth thy servant eats whenever there is cooking in the merchant's house, for the smell of the cooking reached thy servant's nostrils." The pelandok then enquired, "Have you ever gone into the merchant's house?" "Never." "Have you ever gone into his garden?" "Never." The pelandok then enquired of the merchant, "It is true, sir, that the poor man has never been inside your garden?" The merchant replied, "It is true." The pelandok then went to the king and borrowed a thousand dollars. He gave orders that the state curtain should be placed in the middle of the hall and arranged between the merchant and the poor man. He then called out in his shrill voice and ordered the poor man to count out the thousand dollars on one side of the curtain and the merchant to listen very carefully on the other. So the poor man told the dollars thus, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,....." When he completed the tale of the thousand, the pelandok said, "Take, sir, here-with a full and complete settlement of your account." The merchant said, "Very well, bring the dollars to me." The pelandok said, "Why sir, do you want the very dollars? You have received your account and it is all settled. The

poor man took them away by smelling and you have received them back by hearing."

Such is the tale of the pelandok's skill.

Sa'orang saudagar dengan sa'orang miskin.

Sakali pérüstua adalah kapada satu masa konon ada sa'orang saudagar tèrlalu amat kaya dudok didalam satu kampong dèngan bersuka-suka'an makan minum pada tiap-tiap hari, ada dèkat dèngan kampongnya itu sabuah rumah miskin dudok dua laki bini. Maka pada satu hari pérempuan si miskin itu bér-chakap-chakap dèngan sa'orang dèripada tèman saudagar itu, katanya, "Aku makan ini manakala tuan saudagar itu, bérmasak rěndang tumis mènggulai patai baharu aku mémakan, dapat mènchium bahu sègala rěndang tumis gulai patai tuan saudagar itu, kuatlah aku mémakan, jadi sèbab itu gémok sudah aku mémakan ini. Bagitulah adat aku makan, pada tiap-tiap kali hendak makan, nanti bérbahu rěndang tumis tuan saudagar baharu makan." Maka pérkata'an si miskin itu dikhabarkan oleh tèman saudagar itu pada tuannya saudagar sèperti kata pérempuan si miskin itu. Dëmi sahaja tèrdéngar pada saudagar laki istri, pérkhabaran itu bérkatalah datoh saudagar itu, "Patutlah salama-lama ini aku dua laki istri tiada gémok. Rupanya sègala bahu-bahuhan rěndang tumis aku habis dimakan si miskin dua laki bini itu." Maka datoh saudagar pun marah akan si miskin kata nustanya dèngan kinchah hamon sèranahnya sèrta méminta harga rěndang tumis gulai patai ia yang sudah-sudah itu pada si miskin dua laki bini itu. Lalu saudagar itu mèngadu pada raja didalam négéri itu, minta harga bélanja rěndang tumis gulai patai yang sudah itu, sèbab bahu dimakan si miskin dua laki bini itu.

Maka dipanggil rajalah si miskin dua laki bini itu. Dipéréksa, dijawab oleh si miskin, "Bétul tuanku patek aiap*

* Wilkinson p.63 gives Aiapan, victuals prepared for a Raja. In Perak santap is used to describe the royal food, and aiap is the word used by a subject when speaking to a raja of his (the subject's) food, as here.

waktu tēngah bērbahu rēndang tumis datoh saudagar ini tuanku." Maka bērfikir raja itu tiada lalu ia hēndka mēhukumkan, lalu raja itu mēnyuroh nēmukol chanang didalam nēgēri itu bērtanya. "Hoi, siapa-siapa, inche, tuan-tuan, yang chakap mēhukumkan aduan saudagar diatas si miskin ini, dijadikan mēntēri didalam nēgēri ini." Maka sa'orang tiada siapa mēnjawab chanang itu. Didalam itu bērtanya pēlandok pada tukang chanang itu, katanya, "Hei tukang chanang, apa susah raja didalam nēgēri ini, dimana musoh mēlanggar yang dabērtalon-talon, dan dimana hulubalang yang salah bunoh, dan dimana pagar kota raja yang pēchah?" Dijawab tukang chanang. "Satu apa pun tiada, tētapi ada sa'orang saudagar didalam nēgēri ini, mēngadu pada raja minta disēiseikan pēngaduannya, inilah raja pukol chanang chari siapa yang chakap mēnyēliseikan aduan saudagar diatas si miskin dua laki bini, dijadikan raja mēntēri didalam nēgēri ini." Maka kata pēlandok, "Maalum-kan sēmbah aku pada raja. Akulah yang chakap mēnyēliseikan pēngaduan saudagar itu." Jawab tukang chanang, "Baikiah Salam di Rimba, mari bērsama-sama mēngadap." Kata pēlandok, Baiklah? "Maka sampai kabalai rong, titah raja pada tukang chanang, "Adakah kamu dapat orang yang chakap mēhukumkan salah bēnar antara saudagar dēngan si miskin ini?" Sēmbah tukang chanang, "Harap diampun, inilah Salam di Rimba yang mēngaku pada patek, ia boleh mēhukumkan pēngaduan saudagar diatas si miskin itu tuanku?" Maka titah raja, "Bēnarkah, Salam di Rimba, bērchapak lalu mēhukumkan aduan saudagar ini?" Maka sēmbah pēlandok, "Dēngan tinggi daulat, pateklah mēhukumkan diantarsa saudagar dēngan si miskin itu tuanku." Titah raja, "Jika Salam di Rimba, tiada lalu mēhukumkan sēkarang aku bunoh." Sēmbah pēlandok, "Jika dibunoh patek mati, tuanku juga kakurangan hamba?" Titah raja, "Baik, hukumkan sēgéra."

Maka pēlandok itu pun naik kaatas pētarakna. Saudagar dan si miskin pun dipanggil oranglah didudokkan dihadap pētarakna itu. Maka dipērēksa pēlandok, saudagar itu, "Bēr-apa banyak sudah bēlanja datoh saudagar yang sudah habis bahunya dimakan si miskin ini?" Jawab saudagar, "Ada saribu ringgit bēlanja hamba sudah habis?" Maka dipērēksa pula si

misikin itu, "Bétulkah kamu makan waktu tēngah bérbaru masak rēndang tumis gulai patai datoh saudagar ini?" Jawab si misikin, "Bétul ada hamba makan tiap-tiap saudagar itu bérmasak-masak, jadi buhu masak itu sampai pada hidong hamba." Dipéréksa pélandonk si misikin itu, "Adakah kamu masok didalam rumah saudagar itu?" Jawab si misikin, "Tiada." "Dan masok didalam kampong saudagar itu ada kah?" Jawab si misikin, "Tiada." Maka dipéréksa pélandonk pada saudagar, "Bétulkah datoh saudagar si misikin ini tiada pēnah masok kampong tuan hamba?" Jawab saudagar, "Bétul." Maka pélandonk pun měngadap raja, měmohunkun saribu ringgit dan měnyuroh orang mělabohkan tirai tiwangga ditēngah balai rong itu diantara saudagar dēngan si misikin itu. Maka ringgit saribu itu disuroh pélandonk bilang pada si misikin, dēngan měnyaring suaranya déri balik tirai itu. Dan saugagar itu pun disurohnya měndēngar baik-baik déri balik tirai itu. Si misikin bérbilang itu děmikian bunyinya, "Satu dua tiga ampat lima anam tujoh lapan sěmbilan sapuloh." Apabila sampai saribu bilangan ringgit itu kata pélandonk, "Térima datoh saudagar dēngan jělasnya." Maka di-jawab saudagar, "Baiklah bawa mari ringgit itu, hamba térima." Kata pélandonk, "Apa fasal pula datoh saudagar ini mahu itu ringgit? Sudah térima, sudahlah. Si misikin měngambil pada datoh saudagar dahulu dēngan buhu sahaja. Dan datoh saudagar měnérima harganya ini dēngan bunyi." Inilah chétéranya, kapandian pélandonk itu adanya.